

10 Foods



Vegetables and fruits are the foundation of a healthy diet.

They are nutrient dense, high in fiber and also contain antioxidants, which may provide benefits beyond basic nutrition. The goal is to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day – ideally, three servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit. Here are 10 vegetables and fruits that are really exceptional. Eating these foods regularly – alongside a variety of other colorful produce – can lead to a healthier you!

1. Garlic

Why You Should Eat It: For only 4 calories per clove, garlic provides a lot of nutrition: vitamin B6, manganese and “organosulfur” compounds. These compounds may help lower blood pressure and have been shown to have anticancer effects in animal studies.

How To Eat It: After chopping the garlic, let it stand for 10 minutes to maximize the absorptive potential of these compounds. Then, add garlic to salad dressings, soups, stews, sauces and stir-fry’s. Or, try it roasted: cut off the top of the garlic head to expose the cloves. Drizzle with olive oil, wrap in aluminum foil and roast at 400-425 degrees for one hour. Spread this on bread or add it to a sauce or a pizza.

2. Kale

Why You Should Eat It: Kale is an excellent source of vitamins K, A, and C, and a very good source of manganese and copper. Kale also contains 45 different antioxidant compounds known as flavonoids, which have numerous benefits, including anti-inflammatory effects.

How To Eat It: Kale can be eaten raw or cooked. Try swapping out your regular salad greens for some kale, or throw a small handful in your breakfast smoothie. (Trust us – you won’t even taste it!) Kale can be steamed, sautéed, or even baked to make kale chips. Avoid boiling kale, since this cooking process can pull some of those vital nutrients out of the vegetable.

3. Cabbage

Why You Should Eat It: Cabbage is a member of the cruciferous vegetable family. This family, which includes other nutrition superstars such as broccoli, kale, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower, is really outstanding. For only

44 calories in 1 cup, cabbage packs in a good amount of vitamins C, K and vitamin B6. Cabbage contains antioxidants that act in various ways and may help protect against chronic diseases like heart disease and cancer.

How To Eat It: Cabbage can be eaten both raw (like in a coleslaw) or cooked (steamed, sautéed or in a soup.) If you’re going to make a coleslaw, experiment with healthier dressings, such as vinegar, lime juice and oil instead of mayonnaise.

4. Sweet Potatoes

Why you should eat them: Sweet potatoes are packed with more nutrients and antioxidants than white potatoes. Contrary to what the name may imply, sweet potatoes are actually lower on the glycemic index than white potatoes – meaning, they do not spike blood sugar as dramatically. (This is a good thing!) Sweet potatoes contain beta-carotene, fiber and vitamin C. If you keep the skin on the potato, you will get even more fiber.

How to eat them: Simply bake the sweet potato in the skin – preheat your oven to 400 F and pierce several holes in the potato with a fork. This will allow the potato to steam. Bake for an hour, until soft. If you don’t have a lot of time, you could also do this in the microwave for 8 minutes, turning the potato halfway through. Or you can make “fries”: cut the potato up in to wedges, toss with some olive oil, salt and pepper and roast in the oven at 400 F for 30 minutes.

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5. Beets

Why you should eat them: Beets are needlessly avoided because of their sugar content. While beets do have some sugar, they are still fantastic for you, providing a healthy dose of two antioxidants: Betalains and Anthocyanins. Animal studies show that beets can reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer. Beets also contain a compound that can help lower blood pressure. Toss them with some garlic and you've got yourself a blood pressure lowering power couple.

How to eat them: Beets can be eaten raw or cooked. To eat them raw, just peel the skin off the root and shred with a mandolin or cheese grater and add to your salad. You can also try roasting beets: wrap the beet in aluminum foil, skin and all, and place in the oven at 400 F. Roast one hour, let cool, and then peel back the skin with the foil. Chop the beets and add to salads. If you like to make fresh juices, throw some beets in next time.

6. Squash

Why You Should Eat It: Whether it's winter squash, summer squash or spaghetti squash – it's overflowing with nutrients. All squashes are great sources of fiber and carotenoid antioxidants. Winter squash varieties, such as butternut, acorn, kabocha, or carnival, contain beta-carotene, and summer squashes, such as yellow, green or pattypan, contain lutein and zeaxanthin.

How To Eat It: For summer squash, try grilling with a bit of olive oil and salt and pepper. All squash is great in pasta dishes. Winter squash can be roasted in the oven at 400 F with olive oil, salt, pepper and even some garlic and herbs. You can also stuff acorn squash or pattypan squash with some healthy whole grains.

7. Tomatoes

Why you should eat them: Tomatoes are a fantastic source of vitamin C and the antioxidant Lycopene. Studies show that Lycopene may help protect against prostate and other types of cancer.

How to eat them: Tomatoes are probably most commonly consumed atop a sandwich or in salads. Lycopene is better absorbed if the tomatoes are cooked. Try roasting tomatoes in the oven with garlic, oil, salt and pepper. Tomato sauce is also excellent – but it's best to make it yourself. If you are buying one at the store, be sure to read your label: some of these sauces are high in sugar.

8. Broccoli

Why You Should Eat It: Broccoli contains compounds known as glucosinolates, which help protect the body from chronic disease through various mechanisms. These compounds can also help fight inflammation in the body. It is also a great source of fiber, protein and vitamin C.

How To Eat It: Try roasting, steaming or sautéing broccoli. Add to pasta dishes or soups. Broccoli can be consumed raw too – either add it to your salad or dip it in some hummus!

9. Mushrooms

Why you should eat them: Mushrooms are a great source of vitamin D, fiber, copper and selenium. Mushrooms also contain compounds that may support immune system health.

How to eat them: Mushrooms can easily be added to any dish: a stir-fry, soup, pasta dish or a salad. You can also stuff them with some healthy whole grain fillings, such as quinoa. If you are feeling really creative, explore mushrooms as a meat substitute. With the right marinade, a mushroom could be a great substitute for chopped beef.

10. Watercress

Why You Should Eat It: Watercress is really exceptional. For just 4 calories in 1 cup, you get over 30% of your daily dose of vitamin A and 25% of vitamin C. Watercress also contains multiple antioxidants including lutein and zeaxanthin which may protect eye health and protect against cardiovascular health. Growing evidence suggests that watercress may lower the risk of prostate, colon, and breast cancers.

How To Eat It: You can easily add watercress to your sandwiches, salads or smoothies.

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